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General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session

Official Records

94th plenary meeting
Monday, 15 September 2003, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kavan ..... (Czech Republic)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 117 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/57/840/Add.1 and Add.2)

The President: Before proceeding to the items on our agenda, I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/57/840/Add.1 and Add.2, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/57/840, Djibouti and Kyrgyzstan have made the necessary payments to reduce their arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in those documents?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 10 (*continued*)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization

Draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1

The President: In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it a revised draft resolution entitled "Condemnation of the attack on United Nations personnel and premises in Baghdad", which as been issued as document A/57/L.83/Rev.1.

I have the honour to introduce to Member States draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1, condemning the attack on United Nations personnel and premises in Baghdad, Iraq, on 19 August 2003. That was the first time in the history of the United Nations system, with its many field offices around the world, that a deliberate attack on such a large scale was perpetrated against the Organization, taking 22 lives — of which 15 were United Nations personnel — and wounding another 100 innocent persons. It was an act of senseless violence against people serving the cause of peace and security and providing humanitarian assistance. The loss of High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello, has deprived the United Nations of one of its most illustrious and experienced staff members. We the General Assembly members, representing the global humanity, need to formally express our horror and distress at such unwarranted acts of destruction and resolve together to intensify our efforts to act against terrorism.

In that spirit, I also wish to introduce the revision to the original draft resolution, to reaffirm that the United Nations will continue to provide assistance to the Iraqi people and to help build peace and justice. Members of the Assembly may observe that the text of that revision is similar to the text of the last paragraph of the statement made by the President of the Security Council on 20 August 2003, which is contained in

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document S/PRST/2003/13. A copy of that statement is attached to document A/57/L.83/Rev.1, for ease of reference.

I understand that there are no speakers before the adoption of the draft resolution. We shall therefore now proceed to consider draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1, entitled "Condemnation of the attack on United Nations personnel and premises in Baghdad".

May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/57/L.83/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 57/338).

Mr. Wigwe (Nigeria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group in my capacity as the Group's Chairman this month.

Africa reaffirms its unequivocal condemnation of terrorism. We pledge our cooperation with other members of the international community, through bilateral and multilateral efforts, to combat that menace in all its forms.

We condemn in the strongest terms the terrorist attack on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003, which claimed the lives of 15 United Nations staff members, including Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq. We salute the courage and dedication of those international civil servants, who have paid the highest price in their service to humanity.

We reaffirm our support for Security Council resolution 1502 (2003), on the protection of civilians, United Nations personnel and humanitarian personnel in conflict zones.

Africa supports the resolution entitled "Condemnation of the attack on United Nations personnel and premises in Baghdad".

Finally, may I take this opportunity to congratulate the President on the successful completion of, and the efficient way he has conducted, the proceedings of the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. We wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Mr. President, at the outset, please allow me, on behalf of all members of the Asian Group, to express our appreciation and gratitude for your excellent guidance of the current session of the General Assembly.

The members of the Asian Group are gravely concerned about the situation in Iraq. We express our deep shock at the attack on the United Nations office in Baghdad, and we strongly condemn that terrorist violence against United Nations personnel. We express our heartfelt condolences and our deep sorrow to the families of the victims.

It is particularly painful for us that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, perished in that attack. His departure is undoubtedly a huge loss to the United Nations. However, his dedication, his courage and his pursuit of peace and justice will be remembered by the people of the world forever.

Swift restoration of peace and stability and pursuit of the path of reconstruction and development in Iraq are the universal hope of the Asian Group and of the entire international community. The terrorist attack on the United Nations office in Iraq demonstrated once again that the rebuilding of Iraq still faces serious challenges; it will not succeed without broad participation and close cooperation on the part of the international community.

We firmly believe that the process of independence, stability and development in Iraq will not end as a result of this attack. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq will not end, either. Members of the Asian Group wish to join the international community in continuing to support the United Nations as it plays its important role in the matter of Iraq to help the Iraqi people quickly restore stability and development in that country.

Mr. Jegermanis (Latvia): Latvia, as Chair of the Eastern European Group, has the honour to make the following statement on behalf of our delegations.

We should like to draw your attention, Mr. President, to the fact that Russia earlier submitted its amendment to the draft resolution (A/57/L.83/Rev.1) that you presented. We fully support the adoption of that resolution, entitled "Condemnation of the attack on United Nations personnel and premises

in Baghdad". Likewise, we stand behind Security Council resolution 1502 (2003).

We were shocked to learn of the attack against United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August, which resulted in numerous human casualties, among whom, to our deepest regret, was the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, the great Brazilian diplomat Sergio Vieira de Mello. That indiscriminate terrorist attack on United Nations staff who are working hard to bring needed help to Iraq should be regarded as an attack against the whole United Nations system and against humanitarian values and principles.

On that day, we learned once again that terrorism knows no borders and that terrorists have no purpose but destruction and extermination. The presence of the United Nations anywhere has always been regarded as a symbol and a guarantee of universal human values. Undoubtedly, this attack was a cynical challenge to the international community and must not go without a just response.

Our countries, like the whole civilized world, condemn this manifestation of international terrorism and believe that the perpetrators of this crime were trying to ruin the process of Iraq's political and economic stabilization and to prevent the nation of Iraq from creating a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. The latest developments — the attacks against the Jordanian embassy and the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, and the assassination of leading Shi'ite cleric Ayatollah Mohamed Baqer al-Hakim in the holy city of Najaf — make it obvious that Iraq is turning into one of the main battlefields of the international community in its fight against terrorism.

We are convinced that the painful strike that the United Nations endured will not stop us from achieving post-war stabilization in Iraq and the return of that country to the international family of nations.

Mr. Giraldo (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Group to express our support for the draft resolution (A/57/L.83/Rev.1) presented by the President of the General Assembly, condemning the attack against United Nations staff at its headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August 2003. As we join in the strong condemnation of that terrorist attack against the United Nations and the ideals that the Organization defends throughout the world, we wish to express our most heartfelt condolences to the United Nations, to the Secretary-General and to the families and friends of the United Nations staff who lost their lives in this cowardly attack. We also wish to express our solidarity with the more than 100 persons who were injured.

For the Latin American and Caribbean Group, this tragedy holds a profound meaning, since we have lost the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, a distinguished Brazilian diplomat who, throughout his successful career in the service of the United Nations and its Member States, demonstrated outstanding professional and personal qualities that promised a great future in the Organization. As the Secretary-General has said, Mr. Vieira de Mello's premature death is an irreplaceable loss to the Organization. We also support the United Nations in its endeavour to continue to work to consolidate peace and justice in Iraq.

In addition to thanking you, Mr. President, for the wise way in which you have guided the General Assembly, we want to express once again our deepest sorrow as well as our most resolute support for the draft resolution that you presented. We wish to join the urgent appeal made in the resolution to intensify international cooperation to bring to justice the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of this repugnant terrorist act.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I would like, on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, to offer our condolences to the United Nations and to the families and loved ones of the victims of the despicable, tragic crime committed in Baghdad three weeks ago. We want to honour and pay a special tribute to Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, who, as an outstanding international civil servant, dedicated his life to reducing human suffering and helping those most in need. He and his colleagues sacrificed their lives — but that sacrifice must not be in vain. The United Nations has our vigorous support for its actions in Iraq in support of the Iraqi people. We strongly reaffirm the need to respect the safety and security of United Nations personnel in all circumstances. We must do all we can to bring those responsible to justice, and we must reinforce our efforts and international cooperation to combat all acts of terrorism.

In this respect, we thank South Africa and you, Mr. President, for your initiative in presenting to the General Assembly the resolution just adopted. The resolution has our full support.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): Thanks to the gesture of your initiative, Mr. President, we meet today with a sense of deep grief to pay a special tribute to Sergio Vieira de Mello and all the United Nations staff members who perished in the heinous attack in Baghdad on 19 August 2003. He and his colleagues made the ultimate sacrifice for their selfless commitment to promote the ideals that this Organization stands for, the ideals that led to the very creation of the United Nations — our ideals. The attack was particularly tragic for my country. Brazil has lost one of its most eminent sons. At a time of discord and violence, Sergio was a champion for peace and reconciliation. He fought for the dispossessed and the victims of discrimination and exclusion. His loyalty to the United Nations, his leadership in humanitarian causes and his commitment to bringing relief to the destitute were evident in his work in the many international post-conflict situations in which he was involved.

Brazilians are proud of Sergio Vieira de Mello. His achievements set a great example for us all in the pursuit of peace, social development and respect for human rights worldwide. Sergio Vieira de Mello, while serving the international community, honoured his country. In Foreign Minister Celso Amorim's words, Sergio was an artisan of peace whose example will inspire successive generations of Brazilian nationals.

To honour his memory and the memory of those who perished with him, what we can best do is reaffirm our commitment to the promotion of the rule of law, multilateralism and cooperation as a remedy for violence. We must recommit ourselves to the construction of a world in which justice can prevail. From the sadness and sorrow of this moment we must take a lesson of hope and trust. We must go on. Those who died for a noble ideal must inspire us in our commitment to strengthen the United Nations and in our collective search for a future of peace among nations, security and respect for the rights of all human beings, without distinction of any kind. Men and women are mortals; they can be killed. But our dreams — the dreams of those we honour today — are alive. They will carry us forward.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 10?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 17 (*continued*)

(j) Appointment of a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee

Note by the Secretary-General (A/57/111/Add.2)

The President: In his note, the Secretary-General informs the General Assembly that he has received notification of the resignation of Ms. Susan McLurg of the United States of America from the United Nations Staff Pension Committee. The Assembly will therefore be required, at its current session, to appoint a person to fill the remainder of the term of office of Ms. McLurg, which expires on 31 December 2004.

Representatives will recall that this sub-item was allocated to the Fifth Committee. In order for the Assembly to proceed expeditiously on this sub-item, may I take it that the Assembly agrees to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of sub-item (j) of agenda item 17?

As there is no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

In his note, the Secretary-General also informs the General Assembly that the Government of the United States of America has nominated Mr. Thomas Repasch to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of Ms. McLurg. The note further states that the candidature of Mr. Repasch has been endorsed by the Western European and Other States Group.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Thomas Repasch as a member of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee for a term of office beginning on 15 September 2003 and ending on 31 December 2004?

It was so decided (decision 57/411 C).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of

sub-item (j) of agenda item 17 and of agenda item 17 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 8 and 66 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

General and complete disarmament

(i) Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament

Report of the Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (A/57/848)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 66 and its sub-items to the First Committee.

In order for the General Assembly to proceed expeditiously with the consideration of the report of the Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (i) of agenda item 66 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of sub-item (i)of agenda item 66?

As there is no objection, we shall proceed accordingly.

The General Assembly will consider the report of the Open-ended Working Group, contained in document A/57/848.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to take note of the report of the Open-ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda, including the possible establishment of the preparatory committee, for the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament?

It was so decided (decision 57/592).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (i) of agenda item 66 and agenda item 66 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 86 (*continued*)

Sustainable development and international economic cooperation:

(d) High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership

Conference Room Paper (A/57/CRP.5)

Draft decisions (A/57/L.80, A/57/L.82)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly decided to allocate agenda item 86 and its sub-items to the Second Committee.

In order for the General Assembly to proceed expeditiously with the consideration of the draft decisions contained in document A/57/L.80 and A/57/L.82, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to consider sub-item (d) of agenda item 86 directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it that the Assembly agrees immediately to proceed to the consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 86?

It was so decided.

The President: The Assembly has before it a note by the Secretariat, issued as document A/57/CRP.5, containing basic information on regional and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and business-sector entities applying for accreditation to the High-Level Dialogue.

The Assembly also has before it two draft decisions, circulated as documents A/57/L.80 and A/57/L.82.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the two draft decisions contained in documents A/57/L.80 and A/57/L.82.

We turn first to the draft decision contained in document A/57/L.80, entitled "Accreditation of intergovernmental organizations to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 57/593).

The President: We turn now to the draft decision contained in document A/57/L.82, entitled "Accreditation of business entities/organizations to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 57/594).

The President: I will now refer to the matter of the accreditation of non-governmental organizations to the two-day High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development.

I have been informed that further consultations are required on this matter. I have also been requested to defer consideration of this matter to a later date. As this is the last meeting of the fifty-seventh session, the matter of accreditation of non-governmental organizations will therefore be taken up at the fifty-eighth session under the relevant item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of sub-item (d) of agenda item 86 and of agenda item 86 as a whole?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 53 (*continued*)

Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly

Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/57/861)

The President: Under agenda item 53, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", I would like briefly to introduce the text before the Assembly, entitled "Note by the President of the General Assembly", in document A/57/861, which was issued at the last moment and was distributed this morning.

The document has three parts. The first part is a summarization of the accomplishments achieved towards revitalizing the work of the General Assembly during its fifty-seventh session. In this regard, I would like to emphasize the adoption of resolution 57/301, which regularizes the dates of the opening of regular sessions and of the general debate for future sessions by amending rule 1 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Also worth mentioning is that, during its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly initiated, in accordance with resolution 57/8, the convening of two open-ended panels of the General Assembly. The first, on "Afghanistan: one year later", facilitated an in-depth discussion on the subject in plenary. The second, "The role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict", attracted a large audience, especially from non-governmental organizations.

The second and third parts of the document are entitled "Annex" and "Appendix", respectively. Many proposals contained therein were left over from the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. After several rounds of open-ended informal consultations, new proposals were added, especially those which relate to the revitalization of the work of the Main Committees. I refer here to chapter C.

During its fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly continued in its practice of clustering several interlinked agenda items, allowing joint debates on cross-cutting issues in its agenda. As a result of the positive response to this initiative, additional clustering of agenda items and more joint debates have been proposed in the draft programme of work for the fifty-eighth session.

The revitalization is an ongoing process. The enthusiasm and positive inputs on the subject have underlined its importance. Some permanent representatives have even suggested taking a more proactive approach and setting a timetable or concrete deadline for future negotiations on revitalization. Let me express my anticipation that this document before the Assembly, as well as the report from a seminar held in Manhasset, New York, on the revitalization of the General Assembly for the new millennium, contained in document A/57/836, will both provide ample ground for the Assembly's future deliberations on this subject.

I also hope that the revitalization process will be further enriched by new ideas, while the implementation of the agreed reform measures continues to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the General Assembly.

Members will recall that, at its 81st plenary meeting on 13 March 2003, the Assembly adopted resolution 57/301 under this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to include this item in the draft agenda of its fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided (decision 57/595).

The President: This concludes our consideration of agenda item 53.

Agenda item 54

Question of Cyprus

The President: Members may recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session but deferred the decision on the allocation of the item to an appropriate time during the session. It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it then that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided (decision 57/596).

The President: That concludes consideration of agenda item 54.

Agenda item 55

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Letter from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (A/57/860)

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly included item 55 in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session.

In connection with this item, I should like to draw the attention of members to document A/57/860 containing a letter dated 11 August 2003 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which it is requested that the item entitled "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo" be included in the agenda of future regular sessions of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided (decision 57/597).

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 55.

Agenda item 56

Peace, security and reunification on the Korean peninsula

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly included item 56 in the agenda of the fifty-seventh session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 56?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 114

Improving the financial situation of the United Nations

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided (decision 57/598).

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 114.

Agenda item 133

Financing of the United Nations Mission in East Timor

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the Assembly decided to include this item in the agenda of the present session.

It is my understanding that it would be desirable to defer consideration of this item to the fifty-eighth session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to defer consideration of this item and to include it in the draft agenda of its fifty-eighth session?

It was so decided (decision 57/599).

The President: That concludes our consideration of agenda item 133.

Agenda items 136 to 141, 144 to 146, 148 and 150

Agenda items that remain for consideration during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly and that are not included in the draft agenda of the fifty-eighth session as a result of the adoption of resolution 57/323

The President: Members will recall that, at its 19th plenary meeting, on 20 September 2002, the General Assembly decided to include these items in the agenda of the present session.

I should like to remind delegations that, as a result of the adoption of resolution 57/323 of 28 June 2003, entitled "Closed peacekeeping missions", agenda items 136 to 141, 144 to 146, 148 and 150 will not be included in the draft agenda of the fifty-eighth session.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of these items?

It was so decided.

Agenda items that remain for consideration during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly

The President: I should like to remind delegations that the following agenda items on which action has been taken on at previous meetings have remained open for consideration during the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly: items 11, 12, 18 to 21, 24, 35 to 38, 42, 44 to 46, 76, 79, 84, 87, 92, 100, 107, 109, 113, 115 to 117, 119 to 121, 123 to 125 and 160.

As members are aware, these items, with the exception of item 18, entitled "Election of judges of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994", have been included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of these items at the present session?

It was so decided.

Closing statement by the President

The President: The United Nations has been through a very difficult year. During the fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly discussed a wide range of issues, from conflict prevention to more effective implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, from more coordinated and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits to one of the most important issues on the United Nations agenda — reform of the United Nations system.

We have reached consensus and have adopted many resolutions and decisions. However, some of the ideas and proposals have not been finalized. I expect that consideration of these ideas will continue at the fifty-eighth session. However, I also hope that the United Nations will not focus only on General Assembly matters and the Assembly's revitalization, but also on further involvement of the United Nations in guiding the world's affairs. I am convinced that the role of the United Nations should be far more decisive than it has been in recent times and that it should correctly reflect the role assigned to it in the Charter. This obviously applies also to the Security Council and its responsibilities in areas of the maintenance of international peace and security today, particularly including Iraq.

In order for the United Nations to be better equipped for such a key role, it has to implement major reform. I hope that some time in the not-too-distant future, the Security Council will reflect both the needs and the geopolitical situation of the beginning of the twenty-first century. I also expect, as I made clear in my Note by the President of the General Assembly (A/57/861), dated 8 September 2003, on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, that the General Assembly will be strengthened and become more effective and action-oriented. Moreover, I hope that the Assembly will unequivocally embark on the road leading, in time, to what the former Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Jean-David Levitte, called the parliament of the world.

Among the actions of the General Assembly during my tenure as President, the adoption of resolution 57/337 on the prevention of armed conflict stands out as particularly significant. That resolution responds to the Secretary-General's challenge to transform a culture of reaction into a culture of prevention. The strength of the resolution lies in its scope. It recognizes that the root causes of conflict are multidimensional and interrelated, thus requiring a comprehensive and integrated approach. It addresses the role of and need for cooperation among the wide range of actors involved in conflict prevention, including Governments, the United Nations and its agencies, civil society and other relevant players.

My report on the results of the open meeting on the role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict (A/57/864, annex) was made available to the Assembly today. The open meeting, held at the beginning of September, attempted to explore in an interactive way the future role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict and to define how to effectively link the work of civil society in that arena with the efforts of Governments and the United Nations.

An inseparable part of the conflict prevention strategy within the United Nations system is the fight against extreme poverty. We therefore have to do our utmost to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals not only for moral and humanitarian reasons but also to create an optimal socio-economic environment that will help reduce tension and secure a stable and far more just world.

The integrated and coordinated implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits was a new, comprehensive and cross-cutting concept. An ad hoc working group was established to look at the whole mechanism of the follow-up processes to those conferences and summits. It identified ways for simplifying, improving efficiency and integrating the efforts of the United Nations system in support of the implementation of conference outcomes. The General Assembly decided in its resolution 57/270 B, inter alia, to hold a politically attractive major event — which I, personally, perceive to be a summit — in 2005 to review progress achieved in implementing commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. I believe that the resolution will further strengthen the leadership role of the General Assembly and the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in the international development agenda.

A high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly last September was devoted to discussion of United Nations support for the newly created New Partnership for Africa's Development, the NEPAD initiative. As a result, all Member States expressed strong commitment to helping African countries fight and overcome the most difficult problems facing the continent: extreme poverty, lack of water and sanitation, the spread of disease, insufficient education and so on. A special office was created within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to implement the NEPAD initiative.

The General Assembly plenary devoted several days during October and November 2002 to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In December the Assembly, in resolution 57/299, adopted my proposal to organize a high-level meeting on this issue in September 2003. This year marks the first year the promises made in the Declaration of Commitments on HIV/AIDS are due. Further commitments come due in 2005 and 2010. The high-level meeting will focus on sharing best practices and lessons learned in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Throughout the fifty-seventh session, I paid special attention to closer cooperation among the various agencies and organizations of the United Nations system. I benefited greatly from regular meetings with the Presidents of the Security Council

and the Economic and Social Council, as well as with the Chairmen of the Main Committees. As a part of an ongoing dialogue between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, I have had meetings with the President of the World Bank and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. The Czech presidency took all necessary steps to ensure thorough preparation of the first High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, to be held in October 2003.

I wholeheartedly share the Secretary-General's views on the need for thorough reform that would result in the greater effectiveness of the United Nations. That approach requires not only reform within the Organization but also a qualitative change in the attitude of Member States in dealing with reform, bearing in mind that the final objective of that exercise is for the United Nations to have a more decisive say in world affairs. I am sure that you will all agree that for this to take place, the renewed political will of Member States is absolutely crucial. It seems to me that following recent experiences, not only is there a widespread awareness of such a need, but also, at least among some countries, there is a greater political will than ever to do something about it. It remains to be seen whether the opportunity offered will be seized upon or, as has happened several times in the past missed.

During the fifty-seventh session, the General Assembly was mindful of these issues, and the various reform processes of the United Nations moved forward. One of the most important issues discussed was the strengthening of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General put forward 36 diverse reform proposals that seek to align political priorities with the Millennium Development Goals and streamline the Secretariat. In response, the General Assembly formulated its common position in resolution 57/300. Many of the proposals will strengthen the impact of the Organization's work, especially in economic and social areas, by clarifying roles and responsibilities in technical assistance and inter-agency coordination in respect of human rights, information services at Headquarters and abroad; streamlining of management, rationalizing documentation and publication services and so forth.

A challenging task for every General Assembly President over the past 10 years has been to break the stalemate on Security Council reform, including issues such as the addition of new members, both permanent and non-permanent, and restrictions on the power of the veto. The debate over Iraq injected additional fuel into the discussion of the need for Security Council reform. It seems to me that today the minds of many politicians and diplomats are more clearly focused on this problem than at any other time during the last 10 years. However, after chairing the Working Group on Security Council Reform during the fifty-seventh session, I am deeply convinced that the stalemate can be broken only if there is a major political breakthrough in the capitals of some key Member States. I am aware that the history of the last century suggests that such breakthroughs are achieved following major catastrophes, such as the two World Wars, which led to the foundation of the League of Nations and the United Nations, respectively. At the same time, I believe that the international community has reached a far higher degree of sanity, and thus we will not need any more reminders of the need for a change in the status quo than we have already encountered.

To be fair, it should be acknowledged that the Working Group on Security Council Reform did succeed in taking a few small steps. Its report was streamlined significantly with the removal of all proposals that were no longer supported by any Member State. Also during this session, I distributed an informal questionnaire concerning the work and working methods of the Working Group. My informal summary of the results of the questionnaire was distributed to the membership.

I am of course well aware that the responses received do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire membership, and that even the distribution of the questionnaire was perceived by some Member States as somewhat controversial. At the same time, it sparked an interesting and concrete discussion of the issues, which had been lacking during earlier deliberations. Similarly frank and useful discussions on this topic took place in a variety of informal settings. I would therefore strongly recommend the more frequent use of those settings for the future exchange of ideas. Although the result of the questionnaire was inconclusive, it reconfirmed the almost universal frustration that exists with regard to the inability of the Working Group to produce desired outcomes.

The main focus of the General Assembly's revitalization efforts has been on improving working

methods and planning a more streamlined agenda. By adopting resolution 57/301 the Assembly amended the opening date of its regular sessions and the opening date and duration of the general debate, thus addressing numerous requests by Member States for a more accommodating arrangement regarding that important event.

I completely agree with the Secretary-General's observation that many speeches in the General Assembly are repetitive and sterile. Our proposals for more joint debates, for clustering and for biennialization and triennialization of agenda items were intended to deal with part of that problem. I of course fully understand that diplomats sometimes have to read out long speeches written in their capitals whose content, frequently aimed primarily at their own citizens, does not necessarily command a great deal of interest throughout the world, including in the Assembly.

As part of the revitalization efforts, we have attempted to complement that phenomenon by convening open-ended interactive panels emphasizing informal and frank dialogue and exchange of experiences. Last November we convened such a panel of the plenary of the General Assembly for the first time. That panel — whose theme was "Afghanistan: one year later" — facilitated an in-depth discussion on the subject and helped to enrich the subsequent debate on that issue. The open meeting on the role of civil society in preventing armed conflict was another step towards more informal and interactive debates that have the potential to invigorate discussion of various topics in the General Assembly.

From November 2002 to June 2003, we organized many informal consultations on various proposals regarding General Assembly revitalization. The principal elements have been summarized in a note by the President of the General Assembly. Finding consensus on those proposals, including some sort of action plan and time frame for implementation, will remain a task for future presidencies.

Other proposals regarding revitalization are included in the document entitled "From promise to practice: revitalizing the General Assembly for the new millennium". Those proposals emanated from a retreat on that issue held in May 2003. Yet other interesting proposals were discussed at informal meetings, lunches and, most importantly, in the corridors of this building. I found particular merit in a call for a two-year term for the President of the General Assembly. In my opinion, that would provide the presidency with a greater chance to implement initiatives on difficult or controversial issues when reaching consensus is not possible during one year.

At the sunset of my presidency, I would like to share a few reflections on the past 12 months.

In presiding over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly, I focused on a few major issues that were priorities of the Czech presidency. I did so because I strongly believe that the United Nations, and the General Assembly in particular, is unique, and most likely the only forum where global issues can be considered in an integrated manner while taking into account all their political, economic, environmental and social aspects. For instance, conflict prevention is not only a political issue but also one that has very important economic, social and other dimensions.

There are many international organizations dealing with diverse, isolated issues within their specific mandates. But there is only one forum — the General Assembly — in which Member States can consider existing and emerging global or regional problems in their entirety while taking into account linked and overlapping institutional structures. We have an international organization for trade; we have other institutions for development and finance. However, it is in the General Assembly where those issues can be considered together in a holistic manner. Our focus must not disintegrate into a multiplicity of agenda items that duplicate debates taking place in other organizations. If that were to happen, the impact of the Assembly's work would be greatly diminished and its relevance undermined. Any trend in that direction has to be reversed so that we can focus clearly on major issues and deal with them in their complexity and integrity.

In that regard, I believe the priorities of my presidency have been closely interlinked. The struggle against international terrorism cannot be seen solely from a military or security perspective. It is obviously linked with the issue of the prevention of armed conflict and the need to nip in the bud any conflict before it engulfs a whole region, with resulting tragic loss of human life.

The issue of prevention is logically linked to the issue of the causes of conflict. The lengthy negotiations

held prior to the adoption of the resolution on the prevention of armed conflict highlighted the numerous and interrelated issues involved, including extreme poverty, underdevelopment, intolerance and even the perceived indifference of the international community to people's suffering. Therefore, to target extreme poverty, as the Millennium Development Goals seek to do, is to target the potentially fertile soil of frustration, anger and feelings of powerlessness that may result in radical or even terrorist behaviour.

As I have already made clear, I believe that the United Nations needs fundamental reform, as well as renewed and vigorous political will on the part of Member States to see that reform implemented. Let me remind the Assembly that many Member States welcomed some of our general reform ideas, but when it came to specific proposals, that support miraculously vanished. In this ongoing debate, in which questions of national interest and prestige are perceived to be at stake, achieving consensus is particularly difficult. However, with a great deal of determination and courage, a successful outcome can be achieved.

The relevance of the United Nations is and will continue to be judged by its actions, not by lengthy discussions, recycled speeches on irrelevant items or indefinite postponing of decision-making. I am convinced that in order to secure or, as some may say, regain, its place on the chessboard of world affairs, the United Nations has to not only continue its reform process but also modify its ways to more effectively respond to the challenges of the turbulent international environment. I urge all Member States to work for the reform of the United Nations with inspiration, strong political will and sincere dedication.

I would like to pay tribute to the memory of those United Nations staff members who were killed as a result of their selfless commitment to the ideals of the Organization. They were in places where they were often directly in harm's way to further the cause of peace and security and to provide humanitarian assistance to others. This year will be remembered as a poignantly tragic year in the history of the United Nations, which lost many dedicated people in Eritrea, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, of course, most notably in Iraq. My thoughts are with their families and loved ones.

I also wish to express my sincere appreciation to all those who have helped me in the discharge of my duties.

During the year in which I have been privileged to preside over this body, I have learned to rely on the cooperation and guidance of Member States on many issues. Their active participation in meetings has enriched this session and this presidency in immeasurable ways.

I would like to thank the Vice-Presidents, who have taken my place on a number of occasions in chairing plenary and other meetings. That distinct club of diplomats has served as my link to the membership in dealing with many important issues before the General Assembly. My profound gratitude also goes to the Chairpersons, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteurs of the Main Committees alike, who have been of invaluable help in facilitating the work of the Assembly as a whole.

I have always greatly relied on the Vice-Chairs of the working groups and the facilitators on conflict prevention, integrated follow-up, HIV/AIDS, United Nations reform and General Assembly revitalization. I am therefore deeply indebted to all of them for their valuable work.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his tireless efforts in promoting the noble ideals of the Organization. And my warmest gratitude also goes to Under-Secretary-General Chen Jian and his Office for all the support they have afforded me and my Office. Certainly, I would be remiss if I did not thank the United Nations Secretariat, particularly the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management and its General Assembly Servicing Branch, the structure that makes all these meetings possible. Furthermore, I would like to recognize all the interpreters, translators and conference officers, as well as the security officers, who work behind the scenes and ensure that our meetings operate smoothly. I thank them for all their hard work and dedication.

Let me also recognize the tireless efforts and reliable support I have received from my own Office, headed by the Chef de Cabinet and her Deputy. My sincere thanks also go to all members of my team, who have been working with me with great determination, professionalism and enthusiasm, frequently into the small hours. My deep appreciation goes not only to my

Czech diplomatic staff but also to United Nations support staff, including those from Egypt, Philippines, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States, who helped me in the demanding task of the presidency of the General Assembly.

Finally, I wish to extend my very best wishes for success to my most esteemed successor, President-elect of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, Julian R. Hunte, Minister of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation of Saint Lucia. Mr. Hunte and I have had a number of useful discussions on various topics, and I am very glad to see that our views coincide on many issues, indicating that the desired continuity from one session to the next will be preserved. I am confident that under his able stewardship, the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly will achieve many fruitful results.

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: We are now coming to the end of the fifty-seventh regular session of the General Assembly. May I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Closure of the fifty-seventh session

The President: I declare closed the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.